

City Council of the City of New Castle
MINUTES
Special City Council Budget Workshop Meeting
201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Thursday – June 19, 2014 – 6:30 p.m.

Present:

Council President Linda Ratchford
Councilperson Ted Megginson
Councilperson Albert Vannucci
Councilperson John Cochran

Absent:

Councilperson Teel Petty

Also present: City Administrator William Barthel, Mayor Donald Reese, Finance/Human Resource Manager Marian Delaney, Finance Coordinator Kathleen Walls, Treasurer Janet Carlin

Council President Ratchford called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

City Administrator Barthel reviewed the proposed budget. Grant monies are not included in this year's budget, thus providing a better idea of operating costs. Information on grants is provided separately. The chart of accounts has been cleaned up by consolidating some items and eliminating line items no longer being used.

Highlights of the budget:

Discretionary funds address ADA issues involving curbs and streets. Mr. Barthel believes the City should focus on making these improvements. Municipal Storm Water (MS-4) is a long-term item. The budget projects \$30,000 to inspect, inventory, and report to DNREC where the City may or may not be in compliance with storm water ponds.

A new account for Code Enforcement Reimbursements has been added that identifies items that are revenue driven. Items that incur expenses but involve reimbursements are included on this line.

Towing and storage fees – A towing fee of \$65 was approved by Council previously representing fees the City would be reimbursed for by a towing company on behalf of the City. The storage fee is still being discussed. Mr. Barthel and Ms. Walls have discussed with Police Chief Tjaden.

Trustee Appropriation – Part of the appropriation is evaluating the Historic Area Commission process. Trustees will match up to \$10,000.

Ms. Walls identified \$10,650 which represents a 40% match against a Gateway District grant received previously. Expenses have already been incurred so these funds are available for general use.

Total revenue projection is \$4,639,150. FY2014 Budget versus Actual YTD2014 shows a surplus of \$168,079. The City expects \$125,000 from MSC. After another City payroll and miscellaneous expenses are paid there is a projected surplus carry-over from FY2014 of approximately \$140,000. Mr. Barthel suggests taking \$53,033 from available funds to balance the budget.

Public Safety -- A new account was started for the consultant working with the police department. There is \$3,000 shown in the budget with another \$3,000 in the next fiscal year.

Vehicle parts and repairs – The budgeted amount is down to \$20,000 because the City is switching out several older vehicles that have incurred repair costs for new models.

Bike patrols – Budget reflects two patrolling officers for 40 hours/week for five pay periods.

Street repairs and curb cuts -- \$50,000 is being budgeted. There are approximately 155 curbs in the entire City. Mr. Cochran said there are granite cut outs for ADA-related accessibility on State property. He suggested getting pricing on granite cut outs for City work. There may be grant monies available for this work. Mr. Megginson said that granite is being torn out on South Street and the contractor will re-install the granite curbs.

A new account was created for Salt Enclosure with a proposed budget of \$6,500. The City needs to enclose salt being stored at the Trolley Barn. Mr. Barthel is working with MSC on bids to get the work done. This is associated with the MS-4.

Pruning and planting of trees (formerly Tree Commission funds) -- \$20,000 is budgeted. We will continue to work closely with MSC and others to stay within the budget.

Playground maintenance – Sponsored Park funds will be used. These are funds donated many years back from area businesses to sponsor City parks. Appropriate signage was placed at respective locations.

Beautification Committee -- \$500 is being proposed to be used mostly for plantings.

Equipment -- \$2500 for street sweeper parts. We should look into a street sweeping program in conjunction with the storm water issues in the City. Paint for streets -- \$3,000 budgeted. A jackhammer was in this year's budget, but the City purchased a paint spraying machine instead.

MS4 – \$32,500 proposed. We have received a \$30,000 quote from the Conservation District for DNREC compliance with new regulations (inventory, evaluate, and process reports to DNREC); \$2,500 to do an engineering study of the runoff at the Trolley Barn where the garbage trucks are located.

Contributions to Mayor and Council – Reviewed requests from Arasapha Club, New Castle Alliance, Senior Center, and library. \$3,000 has been budgeted for a defibrillator and electronic equipment for visual presentations. Council President Ratchford suggested removing the electronic equipment because the meeting room is not conducive to such equipment. Discussion followed about having defibrillators in all City buildings. Grants can be explored through hospitals, fire department, and other groups.

There is the potential for additional staffing within Administration. Administrative expenses (fixed-asset consulting, professional development, payroll vendor) were reviewed.

Entrance to Administration Building to bring into ADA compliance -- \$13,000 budgeted; \$1,000 grant received . Mr. Barthel hopes the work will be done in a couple of months.

Banks Building -- \$25,000 has been budgeted. Last year \$40,000 was invested in it. Mr. Barthel supports razing the building and putting in a slab and perhaps a gazebo with the understanding that the building could be rebuilt when funds are available. Mr. Vannucci agreed that expenses to maintain the building are greater than razing it and rebuilding. Also discussed was stabilizing the building. The building is situated on the ground and is in poor condition. Mr. Cochran said is unfortunate the building has not been maintained over the years and supports razing it now, putting in a slab and a temporary gazebo and build something later (information booth, restrooms). He would like residents to be able to enjoy the area now. Grants for a new structure could be explored. Public input will be sought before any action is taken.

Total expenses are \$4,832,183.

Grants – Includes ongoing grant monies and grants we plan on applying for, but the majority is grant monies we anticipate receiving (ex.-street aid funds, highway safety).

Mr. Barthel said he and Council President Ratchford plan on meeting with our elected officials after this legislative session to discuss the City's needs in an effort to get additional funds.

A lot of complaints have been received about the 14th Street project. A topographical study is now scheduled with Ziegler and McBride. Good Will Fire Department has concerns with safety on Third Street that would require a full traffic study. Pothole repairs and other infrastructure issues need to be addressed.

Discussion turned to securing a low-interest bank loan or approaching the Trustees for a loan to improve the City's infrastructure and pay off on a yearly basis.

Councilperson Cochran recommended taking a few days to review the budget and meet again to finalize and vote on it. Everyone was in agreement. The next budget workshop meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 6/24/14, at 6 p.m.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilperson Cochran, seconded by Councilperson Vannucci and passed unanimously. Council adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner
Evening Stenographer